



# NABO News

The Magazine of the National Association of Boat Owners  
Issue 7—December 2011



**AGM REPORT  
CRT COUNCIL—NABO CANDIDATE STANDS  
CHAIRS FOR WATERWAY PARTNERSHIPS  
THE BOATERS' MANIFESTO  
THREAT TO THAMES LOCK KEEPERS' RESIDENCY**

ISSN 2047-2110

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# NABO News

The magazine of the National Association of Boat Owners

Issue 7 December 2011

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## Table of Contents

Editorial	4
Chairman's column	5
News:	
For the record	7
NABO's 20th AGM Chairman's report	8
CRT Council	11
LILO gathering	12
Thames boom	13
NABO membership	14
Buckingham restoration	15
Olympic torch	15
Waterway partnerships	16
EA navigation charges	18
Crossword	19
Ribble link	20
A day in Parliament	20
Talking points:	
Boaters' manifesto	21
Thames lock keepers	22
K&A moorings	24
Northmoor weir	28
Letters to the editor	30

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## Contributions

Articles, letters, cartoons and photos are most welcome. Images and photos in JPEG format please.

Contributions to [nabonews@nabo.org.uk](mailto:nabonews@nabo.org.uk)

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## Next NABO News Copy Date

Please email or post your contributions by  
28 January 2012

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## Front Cover Photo Competition

**Thames in winter** – the EA features prominently in this issue. Photo by Fiona Slee.

Win yourself a year's free membership by sending us an image for the front cover of the new NABO News! In the first instance please send a low resolution JPEG by email. The photo should ideally be portrait format with the main action in the centre so that we can print text at the top and bottom, with a width of at least 1800 pixels.

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## NABO Calendar 2012

The following are the proposed dates for Council Meetings in 2012;  
Saturday January 21st, Saturday March 3rd,  
Saturday April 14th, Saturday May 30th,  
Saturday July 7th, Saturday September 5th,  
Saturday October 20th, Saturday November 17th (AGM), Saturday December 1st 2012.

The Council meetings are at the Waggon and Horses, Church St., Oldbury, West Midlands B69 3AD.

Remember that members are welcome to attend meetings – just let the Secretary or Chairman know in advance, contact details opposite.

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Whilst every care is taken to ensure that the contents of this newsletter are factually correct, we accept no liability for any direct or consequential loss arising from any action taken by anyone as a result of reading anything contained in this publication. The views expressed are not necessarily those of the Association. The products and services advertised in this publication are not necessarily endorsed by the Association.

# New year, new start

A look forward to NABO's new year with **Peter Fellows** who examines some Environment Agency issues

I hope those of you who attended the AGM in Stafford had an enjoyable and interesting day. For those who were unable to make it, there is a review of the day by Richard Carpenter and the Chairman's report in this issue.

For me, the Q&A session with guests Lynne Berry and Jim Shead was the most interesting part: I hadn't for example appreciated how the new charity will be able to access such a diverse range of funding that is not available to BW. Our long-standing Hon. Treasurer, Stephen Peters, is standing for election to the CRT Council and I would urge NABO members to support him. While on the subject of NABO Council, webmaster John Slee has some important information in this issue on updating your membership details and paying online.

It is a long time since the EA has featured so prominently in NABO News, but this issue makes up for it – and not entirely in a good way! There are four different aspects of

recent EA activity that are causing problems for boaters: these are the increased navigation charges to come into effect in January; problems with a new pontoon landing at Isis Lock in Oxford - both its proximity to a new boom in Castle Mill stream and access to the pontoon by crew to assist winding boats in strong stream conditions; the proposed demolition of the last remaining full-river Paddle and Rymer weir on the Thames at Northmoor; and lastly, the decision by EA to reduce the numbers of resident lock keepers on the Thames. Each of these has a full report in this issue.

On a lighter note, while out and about in October I noticed a boat on the Caldon Canal named *Rosé and Gin* which made me smile, and I thought NABO News readers might also like to share photos of amusing boat names that you come across. I've kicked off with one of my own in this issue, so please send me your photos for next year's newsletter. *Happy Christmas cruising.*

The Thames at Lechlade  
Photo: Ray Bird



# The CaRT gets going

A very important year ahead for the canal system, **David Fletcher** examines NABO's role in these changing times.

**W**ell here we are again. I have very much enjoyed the last three years as Chair of our fantastic association. Council have asked me to continue for another year, and I am prepared to do so. But I place on record now, my primary objective this year is to encourage new support for the work we do, and ensure the continuity for the future. We cannot hope to deliver as a representative body if we do not embrace change and a new world around us.

The CRT development has continued since the summer with meetings and engagement with the Interim Trustees. They have been immersed in the management issues of the waterway, and of course bring their own experience of Government, charity and business world. By the time you read this, a financial deal will have been done with Defra (and the Treasury?) and we can form a view on whether this is enough for the Charity to make a new start. The question of how much is needed is very much akin to how long is a piece of string. There will never be enough for a profligate authority. But a new learning organisation with a new focus, with new sources of funding, can and will work wonders. The reality is that the dice are rolling, and there is little choice in the short term but to support the Trustees in their decision making. From my contact with them, I understand the cost analysis is thorough and open. So the details are known. Of course the responsibility for the final settlement is entirely political. UK PLC can afford a reasonable settlement and if the deal is forced though at a silly low level like £39m un-escalated, then I think the nation as a whole will not forgive them. When the set-

tlement is announced, don't just listen to the headline number. It is the detail on liability that goes with it that is just as important.

The other important aspect of the CRT needing your attention is the vote for boating representatives. Details are sketchy at the moment, and you will see what information we have to hand elsewhere in this edition. CRT will be writing to all qualifying licence holders very shortly inviting them to vote. It is very important that you do so. Please keep an eye on the NABO web site over the Christmas period for the latest information. Our candidate, Stephen Peters has put himself forward for election and his details are in this issue. Please, please vote in the election.

Returning to the thorny issue of money, the other major Navigation Authority, the EA, is giving us a glimpse of an alternative world under Defra control. I have been supportive of the EA in the past, impressed by the open dialog with user groups and the service levels. But it has all gone wrong on the Thames this year. The initial proposal for 10% a year for the increase in registration fees for 2012 was a jaw dropper, and a reduction to RPI +2% is not welcome, but at least on a near level playing field with BW. The real argument now is about the loss of a small number of residential lock keepers on the Thames. The story is explained elsewhere in this edition.

I suspect that the EA has an eye on the (remote?) possibility of transfer to the CRT in 2015, and wants to maintain its spend on asset condition. Nothing is so sure to stop the transfer than lock and weirs falling to pieces. It is prepared to do this at the expense of day to day ser-

## The Chairman's Column

vice levels for users. It is not helped by EA's complete inability to plan, because in this financial climate Government are constantly asking for cost reviews. So they are reluctant even to spend the budgets that they have for fear of getting further budget cuts round the corner. It is all the more frustrating when, as users, we can compare the asset condition between EA and BW waters. EA is far above that of BW, and I find no case for sacrificing service levels to maintain asset condition at an unreasonably high level. It is a prime case to delay major repairs, as BW have done year on year.

Waterways are too important to be run by Governments, and here we see it confirmed again. They cannot resist the opportunity to under-fund and interfere with short-term planning to balance their books. It is like doing a boat handling test with a supertanker. The CRT may not be perfect, but the EA is the best example we have of why it is needed.

And why are those resident lock keepers so important? Many reasons come to mind, but for me the most important are the human factors around ownership of the individual

locks: experience of the local conditions, pride in responsibility, on the spot emergency response, and service levels to the customer. EA says it can manage all this with non-residents, and so it probably can, but I do not believe it can achieve the same level of commitment and excellence to which we are entitled and accustomed to see. We need operation of the locks and weirs totally error-free to keep the river safe for users and residents. The best way for this to be managed is with the personal commitment that residential lock keepers bring to their specific site.

The Thames Commissioners must have believed it was the right thing to do in years gone by, or the houses would never have been built in the first place. Do you think it is a good idea to manage the flood weirs at unmanned sites with a roving lock-keeper? It is wrong not to retain the resident keepers now. We must find the money to maintain the excellence.

Val and I wish you a Happy New year and look forward to seeing you out on the water, when the ice has melted.

A variety of craft on a busy summer day at Bourne End on the Thames

Photo : Panda Smith



# New Council, new start

## Observations on the Council meeting of 26th November

Pseudonym

The new Council sat for the first time on Saturday 26 November - well I say new but there were all familiar faces following the election at the AGM two weeks before. The first job was to select and elect the various roles. David Fletcher accepted the nomination as Chairman for what will be his fourth year, but did point out that this would be the last year he could commit to the role. Following the retirement from Council of Howard Anguish, who has thankfully committed himself to continue his work for us in the North East and Yorkshire regions, Simon Robbins was elected Vice Chairman by Council. Simon, a long-standing member of Council will continue

with his work on Mooring Matters as well as being a member for several active London-based Boating Groups. Stephen Peters (Hon. Treasurer) and Richard Carpenter (Hon. Secretary) were both re-elected to their previous roles - however Richard has also indicated that this will be his last year at this level due to pressure of his business commitments. Other roles remained with John Slee as Continuous Cruising representative and Webmaster, Peter Fellows as Editor of NABO News and Geoffrey Rogerson for legal matters. All retained the other local representative positions regionally as can be found on our who's who inside the front cover.

**A big thank you to Sue Burchett, who stood down from NABO's Council this year. She was not only Minutes Secretary, but wrote the Pseudonym column for many years. We wish her well.**

## For the record

### Tony Hales unveils a new identity for the Trust

I'm sure that by now everyone now knows that the new waterways charity will be called the 'Canal & River Trust' (or 'Glandwr Cymru' in Wales) but for the record, this is what Tony Hales, the Transition Chairman, had to say about it when the name was announced: "The Government is on track to transfer BW's 2,000 mile waterway network in England and Wales to a new, independent charity. At the same time we have agreed in principle to join forces with The Waterways Trust. The name and symbol of the CRT 'says what it does on the tin'. It comes after a great deal of feedback from staff, stakeholders and the public and is thanks to John Rushworth of design agency Pentagram, who has given us his

time and expertise for free. We are determined that the new Trust is not a rebrand of what has gone before but a new start for the waterways."



Canal & River Trust

"The Veg Pledge has not been withdrawn"

**Robin Evans at a BWAf meeting in October.**



Cartoon: Davis Evans

# A year gone, a year to come

## NABO's 20th Annual General Meeting

**T**he AGM was held at the Stafford Boat Club on Saturday 12 November. The 21st Council was elected, the successful candidates being: Richard Carpenter, Andy Colyer, Peter Fellows, David Fletcher, Stephen Peters, Simon Robbins, Geoffrey Rogerson and John Slee. After the formal meeting transitional trustee of the C&RT, Lynne Berry OBE, and Jim Shead, waterways photographer and writer joined the meeting for an open question and answer session

### Chairman's report

Good morning.

This has been my third year in the Chair and I have to express my appreciation to members and to Council for their continued support. Your Council and Regional representatives are a dedicated team and it is a pleasure to work with them. Your team have continued to share the workload, each taking their particular knowledge and experience and using it to good advantage. During the year Peter Fellows, our NABO News Editor, joined Council. This year two Council members have stood down, Howard Anguish and Sue Burchett and I would like to thank them for their contribution and wish them well with their on-going boating activities..

This leaves us very short on Council. I would like to emphasise that Council is not a secret society for a few. Please do come to a meeting and see what it is all about and whether you can contribute. It is important that we maintain representation from all styles of boater; be they bankside or marina moorers, leisure boaters, share boaters, liveaboards or continuous cruisers. I get equal criticism that we spend too much time on CCers and that we don't support them, so the balance

cannot be far off. We would also benefit from reinforcing our coverage of areas by regional representatives because local knowledge and co-ordination is very important.

### Getting involved

NABO representatives have attended a full range of consultation meetings with DEFRA, BW and EA, BSS, MCA, NINF etc, both nationally and locally. These are important interfaces, because it is only with the long-term relationships in place, that we can hope to influence strategy, and credibly address the short-term issues that all service providing organisations face. We try and provide an indication of the meetings on the website calendar, and if you look, you can see what is going on. The style and content of these meetings with BW will change in the future and how we will align with the new CRT is a subject I want to return too later. As I said last year, we have not always been able to cover all the consultation meetings, and there is always a need for more members to support this work to share the load. Please do volunteer. We should not forget that BW is not the only game in town, there are important issues on EA and other waters.

### NABO and the consultations

A lot of energy has gone into consultations with BW, EA and DEFRA over the proposals for the new waterways charity. This has been both verbal and written, and I would like to thank all those who have made a contribution to this important work. A good deal of this is about the credibility of what we are told, and it is important that many people are exposed to the information.

As we know the proposals are moving ahead, and are at the critical stage where the financial deal



will reach a make or break point any time now. NABO has been supportive, but not at any price. The money has got to be right, and we are reliant now on the interim Trustees making a sound judgement. Lynne Berry is here this afternoon, and she is an important player as the most senior of the interim trustees. I am sure the question of money will come up. I am also concerned that BW does make a transition of approach and style and that they do not carry on as before, with just new reliance on the CRT to provide the money.

If you are concerned about whether the CRT is the right thing, you are not alone. But just look at the mess EA are in over budgets and increases in licence fees. They have also picked an argument with users over lock cottages and residential keepers, a battle they lost some years ago. They have gone from hero to zero in a very short space of time.

John Slee carried out the boaters cost survey again this year, and we had more responses than previous years, but still not enough to be statistically significant. Both EA and CRT have asked us for data in the year, and we have been cautious about releasing it for this reason.

Please please respond this year, so that we can get to the magic number of 300 plus. The general impression was this year that boaters had not spent much more in 2010 than they had in 2009, possibly because the cost increases were compensated by less usage or delays in maintenance. This is an important conclusion at a time when prices go up year on year, and we are warning navigation authorities that licence fees should not be hiked for fear of collapsing the market.

**Membership fears**

Membership numbers are still dropping a little, and my thanks go

to all those who have recruited new members. We attended Crick again and it is good to get our name out there, particularly with new boaters. The drawback is that it is expensive, and the evidence of membership gain and retention does not support going again as a pure recruitment exercise. Richard Carpenter has done a sterling job arranging and leading "Question Time" road shows at boat clubs over last winter and it is planned to hold a further group of these in the coming year. We all know the value of belonging to a national organisation with long-term experience and knowledge, but getting hard cash for that need, particularly from new boaters, is another issue. Identifying that unique selling point and gaining new members, particularly younger members, is very important. Of course that is not the only work that Richard does and we have to thank him for his bound-

Guests Jim Shead and Lynne Berry join David Fletcher during a 'roadshow' forum and discussion at the AGM  
Photos: Fiona Slee



less energy in keeping us on track day in day out.

### **Mooring Strategies**

BW has continued to consult over mooring strategies nationally and locally. These latter items have not gone well and we have a continued vacuum of lack of enforcement and general mistrust. Earlier in the year, BW enforced a Section 8 case on the K&A, and the legal process has been heavily publicised. Leading up to this, BW had refused to talk to us about legal issues and our complaints. Following this there have been a number of meetings and correspondence with BW, with the result that there have been changes to the 'Advice for boaters without a home mooring,' with NABO taking a prominent role in this. I would like to thank John Slee and Geoffrey Rogerson for their work in this area. All this is closely related to the NABO legal complaint, and this outcome has achieved 90% of our aims.

There are still some issues around boaters' terms and conditions that we will continue to batter away at. In the meantime, the guidelines are more based on the Act, and less on BW's own interpretations. The local mooring strategies to some extent are working to reverse this by creating local specific rules. It is by no means clear that this is to the benefit of boaters in general. So I was not sorry to see the demise of the Lee proposals. The threat of Roving Mooring Permits remain and we shall watch this carefully. Simon Robins has been working hard on BW on the issues of Residential Moorings terms and conditions. This too has shown some movement on the part of BW after years of entrenchment. It is another example of where steady pressure over a long period can have an effect. Our thanks to Simon for his dedication.

Again we have actively worked with other waterways user groups this year. We do not always see eye to eye, but avoidance of duplicated effort is important and co-operation

can help too. Yet we have to retain our identity and our USP if we are to retain, and perhaps grow our membership. NABO has been attacked several times on the canal internet world in the last year, and this is always a concern as to whether this damages our reputation. Sometimes we have felt the best strategy is to not do anything, as becoming deeply involved has not been successful. I take the view that open discussion is healthy, and indeed we have taken on board some of those comments. Of course some of the contributors are serial mud wrestlers, and they have little credibility.

### **Communication in the modern world**

Our own communication tools are important, and I would like to highlight Peter Fellows' work in taking NABO News to new places. I am going to ask Peter to talk about the plans for this in a minute, but let me record the thanks of us all for what he has done in the last year. We send copies to about 70 of the great and good, and the influential out there.

Hardly a national meeting goes by that I am not asked about Nabo News, something about the content, the style, the presentation. It is a very important media, not just for us, but also in influencing the waterways and creating a USP.

Our website continues to be an important communication tool too. Does it work for you? Do you use the RSS feeds and Facebook? John is burning man-hours with two projects for the site at the moment. One is the Paypal membership site for recruitment and renewal. This is open for new members and it is planned that further tools will be available to manage the payment of membership fees.

Our membership listing is very dated now and the longer term plan is for the lists to be moved to a web-based database for ease of administration. Our thanks to John for his dedicated work.

This concludes my main report.

# Nominations for C&RT Council

David Fletcher outlines what is involved in next year's elections.

**B**oaters are being asked to stand for election for the CRT Council. Nominations open on 12 December 2011. The initial number of Council Members will be 35, four of which will be elected by private boaters, with one vote per licence (shared ownership boats will only have one vote). Two more will be elected by boating businesses and one person will be nominated by the British Canoe Union. Although the trustees will be responsible for policy and strategy, the Council will be the guardian of the long-term values and purposes of the CRT. It will have a role in helping to shape policy, raising and debating issues, and providing guidance, perspective and a sounding board for trustees. It will also have the power to appoint or dismiss trustees. Members of the Council will bring the experience and perspective of the constituency they represent and provide a voice for their interests. They will serve a four-year term.

Tony Hales, CRT chair, said: "Having boaters on board is essential to the success of the Trust. I am writing to all licence holders and I encourage them to put themselves forward and add their voices to those shaping the Trust's future." Boaters wanting to stand for election will need to complete a simple nomination form, which will be available to download from [www.canalrivertrust.org.uk/councilnomination](http://www.canalrivertrust.org.uk/councilnomination) from 12 December 2011 to 18 January 2012. To be eligible to stand or vote in the election, boaters must hold a 12-month BW annual licence or river registration on

**NABO is pleased to support the following candidate:**

## Stephen Richard Peters

A member of NABO Council for the last 18 years and currently Hon. Treasurer and Rivers Secretary. Stephen has been a boat owner since 1989 and owns a Seamaster 30 motor cruiser based on the River Severn in a marina. He is very much a practical boat owner and carries out routine maintenance and re-fitting works himself. His experience of inland waterways dates back to the 1960's with a series of family boats ranging from a small cabin cruiser to eventually a 42 foot twin screw diesel motor yacht based on the Warwickshire Avon and making frequent voyages on to coastal waters.

He is a member of RYA, Avon Navigation Trust, RNLI (Governor), Railway & Canal Historical Society, Cruising Association and Seamaster Club. He was Hon Secretary of the Droitwich Canals Trust in the 1980's and still takes a keen interest in waterways history and restoration. He is actively involved in non-party political local government and was an elected district councillor for 12 years. He is currently a county councillor and parish councillor representing the area where he lives in North East Worcestershire (which includes a short section of the Northern Stratford-upon-Avon canal).

If elected to the Council of the Canal & River Trust he would aim to represent ALL owners of boats using the CRT waterways including broad beam and river users. His considerable knowledge of waterway legislation, Acts or Parliament and local government should be of value to the CRT Council and he will strive to ensure that the Trust makes sound decisions in the interests of all who navigate the waterways.

Stephen's nomination must be supported by ten sponsors who each hold a valid 12 month boat licence or river registration.



18 January 2012. Nominations must be supported by ten sponsors who each also hold a valid 12-month boat licence on this date. Voting will take place via a designated website or by SMS text. Voting by post will also be possible, but only for this first set of Council elections. The election is being managed by the Electoral

## News

This information is based upon the information received from the Trustees and the Transition Appointments Committee

Reform Services and the timetable is as follows:

- Monday, 12 December 2011. Nomination forms available
- Wednesday 18 January 2012. Nominations close
- Wednesday, 8 February 2012. Voting
- Friday, 9 March 2012. Voting closes
- Monday, 12 March 2012. Election results announced.
- First meeting of the Council in the week commencing 26 March 2012.

NABO regards this as a very important step in representation of users

in the management of the CRT.

There are many uncertainties about the CRT, but that is not a reason to miss a chance to engage at every level of the management of our principle inland waterways navigation authority.

The winners of the election will be put forward for ratification by the Appointments Committee of the CRT Council. Every potential member of the Council, whether elected, nominated or co-opted will have to be ratified by the Council's Appointments Committee as a person 'fit and proper' to hold the appointment.

## LILO Gathering



### Low Impact Life Onboard

#### More information;

[www.lilo.org.uk/gathering](http://www.lilo.org.uk/gathering)  
email: [gathering@lilo.org.uk](mailto:gathering@lilo.org.uk)

Low Impact Life Onboard (LILO) is hosting a gathering of boaters near Devizes on the K&A next spring from 13–15 April. LILO isn't an organisation as such, just a loose network of boaters who are interested in living sustainably on the waterways and high seas. The gathering will be an informal affair - more of a get-together for boaters to share news and skills. All boaters are welcome and there will be plenty of camping space for those who decide not to bring their boats. One of the main features of LILO gatherings is the opportunity for boaters to share their skills and knowledge with other liveaboards. At previous gather-

ings we have had workshops on diesel engine maintenance and 12-volt electrics, and also building a bike-powered 12v generator and tips on helping your boaters' group work together more smoothly. If you have a skill or knowledge to share, ideas or requests for workshops, contact LILO at [gathering@lilo.org.uk](mailto:gathering@lilo.org.uk). Next year, there will also be sessions on the upcoming changes to BW and information about the Canal and River Trust, the K&A moorings plan and a chance to get together with people who want to do something about it all. There will also be some sessions on how to run workshops for those who aren't too confident, or have never done it before. You can find out more about LILO at [www.lilo.org.uk](http://www.lilo.org.uk).

## Can you help with NABO News?

We are looking for a volunteer, or preferably two, to help with the preparation of NABO News by proofreading the text for each issue. This will take about 30-45 minutes, seven times a year. If you think you could help, please let us know at [nabonews@nabo.org.uk](mailto:nabonews@nabo.org.uk).



# Thames boom at Oxford

Last year a boom was installed across the southern section of Castle Mill stream just below Isis Lock, which joins the stream with the Oxford Canal. Its purpose is to reduce the risk of boats being swept down the stream onto the weir at Hythe Bridge in times of strong water flow, and to prevent unauthorised mooring along the banks of the stream. The boom was designed to allow small boats to access the lower stream. It is now proposed to install a physical height restriction to further deter larger boats with residential accommodation from ignoring the warning sign and

boom. BW, The EA and Oxford City Council have invited local residents and organisations to register their views on the addition of the height restriction. NABO has responded to the consultation (see the website) including comments on the difficulties in mooring on the new pontoon landing at Isis Lock and turning boats above the boom. NABO has also suggested that the turning diagram should be redrawn to scale for clarity

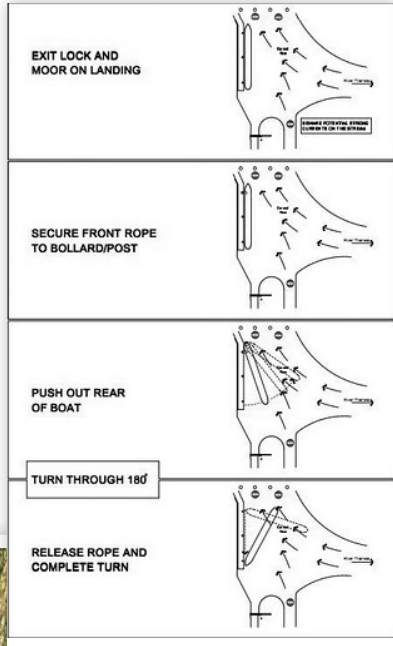


Diagram: Turning at Isis lock  
 Left : Boat moored downstream of the new boom  
 Below: Access to the new pontoon landing is from the far end, making it more difficult to wind a boat in strong stream conditions as recommended  
 Photos Fiona Slee



# Don't chuck the wrapper

...or rescue it from the bin, if you already have, says **John Slee**

**D**on't throw your NABO News envelope away! The address label shows your membership number. Inevitably details change over the years and it is so easy to forget to inform us. So we are trying to make it easier for you and us, by letting you update your details through the website and even renew on-line.

## Email Addresses

In response to members' feedback, we will also be reinstating our occasional emails to inform you of any important developments on the boating scene. However, when I checked our records, I discovered that we only have email addresses for about half of our members. Is yours out of date? It would be helpful if you could let us know if you have an email address or confirm what yours is. On the 'Members' menus on the website <http://nabo.org.uk>, there is a new option: 'Update my Email Address'. Using this you can tell us your email and we will add it to or amend your record. Fill in your name and email address, put 'Email Address' in the subject box and your membership number in the message.

## Joining On-line

Over the coming months, the NABO website will be gradually changing, to allow boaters (and boating hopefuls) to join and pay online. This is already possible to a degree, since we have linked with PayPal to accept payments through a PayPal account or by debit or credit card. However, at the moment a new applicant still needs to send an application form by post. The new system will do away with the need for a paper application so, it will be the ideal time to encourage friends to sign up ready for 2012! It will also allow existing members to renew subscriptions online by Paypal or card.

## Updating your details

One of the associated benefits will be that members will be able to check and correct their own details on the website, which is where the membership number comes in.

If you have already registered on the website, you will have set up a username, email address and password. This won't change. When we announce that the new membership system has gone live, you will have access to your contact and boat details. This information will only be visible to you and our administration team. Please login, as before. Go to the 'Your Profile' link on the User Menu and click on 'Update Your Profile' under 'Edit'. When you have checked your details, and made any necessary amendments, click on 'Update' and your information will be instantly updated. In the future, if you change your email, move house or change/add a phone number, buy a new boat or move moorings, don't forget to update your NABO details too.

If you haven't yet registered on our website and if we have your email, we propose to register you automatically when the new membership system goes live. We will email your username and password to you when we have set it up. You can then login and check your profile details, as above.

If we don't have your email and you haven't managed to use 'Update my Email Address' to let us have it (why not? - it's easy!), in due course we will send you your username and password by 'snail mail'. Then you will be able to login and check your details like everybody else.

## No internet access?

Oh, and we realise not everyone uses the Internet, so don't worry, we still accept paper, ink and an envelope.



# Buckingham restoration

**A**s part of its work to restore the Buckingham Arm of the Grand Union Canal, Buckingham Canal Society (BCS) has re-pointed and repaired of one of the remaining original canal bridges at Little Hill Farm, north-east of Thornton College. The sympathetic restoration by skilled craft members of the society included using traditional lime mortar and original materials wherever possible and hand making clay bricks to the original shape and size.

Opening in 1801, the canal to Buckingham ran for just under 11 miles from the GU at Cosgrove Lock along the Stony Stratford and Buckingham Arms. It was previously used to transport bricks, coal, manufactured goods and imports from the London Docks as well as agricultural produce from farms and villages along its route. The original route passed through Old Stratford, Deanshanger, Thornton, Leckhampstead Wharf, Thornborough Mill, Maids Moreton Mill and Bourton Meadow. Much of the canal is now dry and parts have been built over since the canal's closure, requiring a new route to be

constructed in some sections.

Early in 2010, BCS commissioned an outline feasibility study for restoration of the entire length, which concluded that it was feasible, although significant funding and commitment will be required. BCS is actively seeking new members to join the existing 200 or so and is also seeking funding to progress the restoration, working in partnership with local authorities and private companies. The society runs three work parties on alternate Thursdays and the second Sunday of each month. No experience necessary!

**For more details:**

Contact BCS at [buckinghamcanal.org.uk](http://buckinghamcanal.org.uk), email [info@buckinghamcanal.org.uk](mailto:info@buckinghamcanal.org.uk), or write to Terry Cavender, at 7 Buckingham Road, Akeley, Buckinghamshire MK18 5HL, Tel: 07976 629440

The restored Little Hill Bridge on the Buckingham Arm  
Photo: Richard Lewis



# Olympic torch will travel the canals

The Pontcysyllte Aqueduct will be one of the locations for the 2012 Olympic Torch Relay, with the Olympic flame travelling over the aqueduct on 30 May. Other canal-side locations will be Foxton Village, Camden, and by canal boat through the Black Country Living Museum on the Dudley Tunnel Branch. The relay will end by travelling down the River Thames to the Olympic Stadium, arriving on 27 July for the Opening Ceremony of the Games.



# New Partnership Chairs

## Waterways Partnerships appoint chairpeople

Those interested in joining a newly appointed chair on their local Waterway Partnership or in applying for one of the remaining positions of chair can find role descriptions and application details at [www.britishwaterways.co.uk](http://www.britishwaterways.co.uk) and [www.thewaterwaystrust.org.uk](http://www.thewaterwaystrust.org.uk).

**T**he Canal & Rivers Trust has started to recruit people to chair the Waterways Partnerships that will help shape the future of the waterways in each of the partnership areas.

Each Partnership will consist of at least eight volunteers who will be drawn from the local community and who will collectively have a broad spectrum of expertise relevant to the development of the waterways. This includes experience in fundraising, volunteering, finance, planning and regeneration, boating, environment, heritage, engineering, community engagement, and working with partners in local government.

The role of each Partnership is to give local people a greater say and role in how their canals and rivers are run. They will work with local managers to develop strategies and plans, guide decisions about spending, and help develop external funding and volunteering. They will champion the interests of the waterways at a political level, with business, and with the community and develop action plans for local engagement and participation. Each of the 11 administrative areas of the waterways network will have a Partnership Board up and running by April 2012.

The following chairs have now been appointed and the chairs for the West Midlands and North West have agreed to continue:

### **Manchester & Pennine: Professor Walter Menzies.**

Previously chief executive of the Mersey Basin Campaign, Walter has also held non-executive positions at Waterwise, Healthy Waterways Trust, Land Restoration Trust and Look 2011.

### **North Wales & Borders: Jim Forrester.**

Currently director at Imperial War Museum North in Manchester where he has drawn in champions, stakeholders and raised substantial capital and revenue funding each year.

Previously a boatbuilder on the canals, Jim has spent the last 27 years working within charities in a variety of roles; from boat conservator to director of a new branch of a national museum in the region.

### **South Wales & Severn: Jack Hegarty.**

Managing director of Wychavon District Council since 2004, where he leads a complex public sector organisation, builds relationships with Ministers, MPs and Councillors and deals with local communities and partner organisations at a national and local level. He was directly involved with the Droitwich Canal restoration for 11 years.

### **Kennet & Avon: Fleur de Rhe Philipe.**

A member of Wiltshire Council since 1997, currently as cabinet member for economic development and strategic planning. As company secretary of The K&A Canal Trust for ten years, Fleur was instrumental in setting up the partnership that achieved a £25 million grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund to complete the restoration.

### **North West: Professor Steven Broomhead.**

Currently professor of entrepreneurial education at Liverpool Hope University, Steven previously spent eight years as chief executive at Northwest Regional Development Agency, before which he was chief



executive at Warrington Borough Council. He has been chair of a number of private and public organisations.

**West Midlands:  
Peter Mathews CMG.**

Past chair of the Black Country Consortium, which coordinates regeneration in the Black Country and chairman and managing director of Black Country Metals. A prominent business leader, Peter has been chair of various national and international organisations including The World Recycling Conference, UKTI Advanced Engineering and the Midlands World Trade Forum.

**Museums:  
Laurence Newman.**

This post is the successor to The Waterways Trust Museums Management Board.

Currently Chairman, Epsom & St Helier University Hospitals NHS Trust. Previously, Laurence spent 20 years with KPMG as the partner responsible for their Leisure and Tourism Consulting Group. He is also a non-executive director of Grove End Housing Ltd, a trustee of Creativity, Culture and Education and a member of the Advisory Board of The Foundation, a growth and innovation consultancy.

Tony Hales, CRT chairman, commented: "I am delighted that such a high calibre of people have come forward to chair these important positions within the CRT. Each will prove to be well placed to champion the interests of their local waterways. The Waterways Partnerships are integral to the stewardship and development of the network, providing new perspectives and insights, opening up new resources and ideas, and giving local people a greater opportunity to support their local canals and rivers: something that is integral to the success of the CRT."

Chairs are now being sought for the remaining Partnerships in the North East, Central Shires, East Midlands, South East and London and recruitment will take place in a second round starting in January.

The Transition Appointments Committee comprises Roger Clarke and Dinah Nichols, who are members of the Defra Advisory Panel on First Appointments and Transition, and two transition trustees, Lynne Berry and Tom Franklin. They work with Roger Hanbury, Chief Executive of The Waterways Trust and local waterway managers. All positions on the Partnerships will not be remunerated, but agreed expenses will be reimbursed.



**I name this boat ...**

Have you spotted a boat name that made you smile? If so please let me have a photo to use in future issues. I'll kick off with this one of the lavender boat that many of you will have seen at Anderton Marina.

Photo: Peter Fellows

## A New Year's message from the EA Navigation charges 2012-14

### Statement by:

Stuart Taylor  
E&B Manager,  
Environment Agency

Following careful consideration and discussions with the boating community at national and local levels, we have decided to increase our navigation charges by the consumer price index plus 2% per year in 2012, 2013 and 2014. Our navigation charges will consequently rise by 6.4% from January 2012. We are doing this to reduce our reliance on public funding to provide a sustainable future for our navigations, regardless of who manages and operates them. Cost inflation and reductions in public funding mean that we must increase our income and reduce our costs to sustain the needs of our waterways. Increased funding from charges is part of a wider package that will see us reduce our operating costs; prioritise funding to protect capital investment; increase income from commercial and external sources; and, deliver a sustainable service that meets the needs of our different customers as best we can – as well as engaging the support of local people and communities to jointly operate, maintain and own their navigations and shape how they are used and developed.

Having listened to the concerns of the boating community we will also:

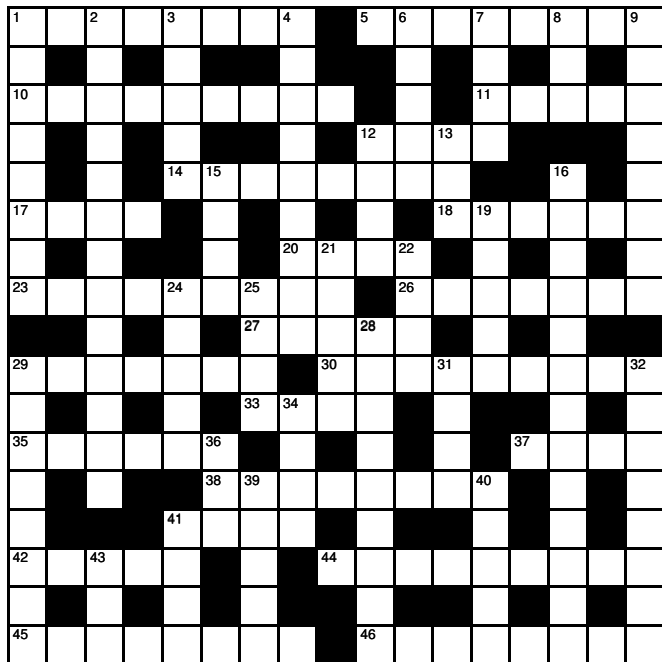
- annually review the impact of our increases, together with economic and other pressures on registration numbers and review our subsequent increases for 2013 and 2014 if we are not confident that our customers can sustain them;
- freeze our navigation charges for commercial craft at 2011 levels until 2015;
- introduce a rolling year for our annual registrations;
- develop a system for part refunding the registrations of craft in specific circumstances (to be defined).

In an ideal world there would be no increase in our charges but unfortunately the reality is that we need to deal with the increasing pressures of reduced public funding and inflation that we are faced with to help secure the future of our waterways. Our navigations face an uncertain future without such difficult actions and could quickly become unreliable and then unsafe to navigate if we fail to act.

The Ouse at Ely

Photo: Amy-Alys Tillson





# NABO NEWS BUMPER XMAS CROSSWORD N° 3

Seasonal Greetings to all  
puzzlers from Canaldrifter

## Answers to Crossword N° 2

Across: 1 Nabo, 3 Fletcher, 9 Trustee, 10 Dowse, 11 Office-holder, 14 Ass, 16 Hop it, 17 Sum, 18 Pull together, 21 Table, 22 Admiral, 23 Breasted, 24 Area. Down: 1 National, 2 Bluff, 4 Lee, 5 Tidal streams, 6 Hawsers, 7 Reef, 8 Stockholders, 12 Hippo, 13 Umbrella, 15 Scumble, 19 Hirer, 20 Stab, 22 Ale.

Thank you to all the readers who sent answers to the prize crossword N°2. The winner of the £25 prize, kindly donated by a NABO member, was Tim Fish of Peterborough.

### Across

- 1 Catches nothing original in your hand! (4,4)
- 5 Serpents not suitable for Christmas gifts! (8)
- 10 Holiday could show its charms (9)
- 11 To remove folded tabloid off the top of one's head! (2-3)
- 12 Hole in the boat (4)
- 14 Ebb or flow of 10? (8)
- 17 Pulls rings (4)
- 18 Acceptance that we break cane (6)
- 20 Slough Branch river location not right (4)
- 23 Vessel in semi-urban crash! (9)
- 26 Discharge duct a hurter, badly? (7)
- 27 Bad crew in a cruiser go back (5)
- 29 Temporarily release, from sinking we hear? (4,3)
- 30 Quiet landing on the Selby canal (9)
- 33 Copies in a pesky way (4)
- 35 Mr Baston. Past BW PR man who did much for boaters (6)
- 37 Yes. Right. The new one will soon be here (4)
- 38 Boat access for mobs? (8)
- 41 Heirs on a merchantman (4)
- 42 What you do with Christmas Dinner after 4? (3,2)
- 44 Curse what you are struggling with? (9)
- 45 Rocks. Wreck risks 'ere! (8)
- 46 Waits on foot (6,2)

### Down

- 1 Colin has upset saint at 14 (8)
- 2 Irregular broken rib in a botch in a River Ure town (13)
- 3 Inquisitive, but indecisive, up and down (5)
- 4 Elvis rang round dribbling for Christmas Dinner! (9)
- 6 Propelled the boat angrily (5)
- 7 Secure animal (4)
- 8 Nowt left when river does not flow to 28 (3)
- 9 Writ a U-boat Petty Officer serves on Sharples? (8)
- 12 Canal breadth at Tixall? (4)
- 13 The basic unit of money in Romania (3)
- 15 Addict? Almost sure (4)
- 16 Poor orphans censor TV newsreaders, with boating skills? (13)
- 19 Bundle of presents he affably offers? (5)
- 21 River runs out of leverage on the edge (5)
- 22 Corrosion. We're in an old bus! (4)
- 24 Painful nut? (5)
- 25 A tiny bit of audiotape (4)
- 28 Sad waters are rough in one direction (9)
- 29 Waves that wreck (8)
- 31 Don't be stupidly daft on feast day this Chistmas. Be relaxed! (4)
- 32 Emblems. One we hark to, in the RYA, almost! (8)
- 34 Draws through NE locks? (4)
- 36 Back self in a dog-eared way! (3)
- 39 Poetic anti-corrosion aid for the boat? (5)
- 40 Our Minutes Sec sustained but not tied badly! (5)
- 41 Fight the boom (4)
- 43 Definite article (3)

## News

The Ribble Link will be celebrating its 10th birthday next year in spectacular fashion with a host of events over the Bank Holiday (25–27 August), organised by the IWA. The Ribble Link Trust will have full details at [www.ribblelink.co.uk](http://www.ribblelink.co.uk).

**On the way to the Ribble Link**

Photo: Tony Lenten

## Ribble Link restrictions

BW has recently decided that from 2012 onwards it ought to be enforcing its draught limits on the Ribble Link. The published limit has been two feet but this has not been checked. BW is now looking into how many boats have crossed the link with a draught in excess

of the recommended 24 inches. If you know of any boat with a deeper draught that has used the link, particularly in the last couple of years, please get them to let BW at Wigan know, at [enquiries.northwest@britishwaterways.co.uk](mailto:enquiries.northwest@britishwaterways.co.uk) for the attention of Ruth Moran



## A day in Parliament

**Source:**

Hansard Citation: HC Deb, 21 November 2011, c197W

David Heyes (Labour, Ashton-under-Lyne) asked the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs: “1) what estimate she has made of the length of waterways managed by British Waterways that require dredging; and what the cost would be of carrying out such dredging. And 2) what estimate she has made of the length of British Waterways’ canals and rivers to be dredged in 2011-12.”

The reply from Richard Benyon (Parliamentary Under Secretary of State - Natural Environment and Fisheries, Defra; Conservative, Newbury,) was: “Dredging is an operational matter for British Waterways and it applies risk based prioritisation to its maintenance expenditure.

The Government require BW to operate and maintain waterways to standards that reflect use and prospects of use. BW undertakes regular waterway channel depth surveys to identify which stretches of its canals fail to meet the minimum depth to enable reasonable navigation in a location. Around 287 km of the 3,000 km network do not meet the criteria and consequently require dredging. The cost of undertaking this dredging would be around £40 million. BW plan to dredge, at a cost of £4.2 million, 45 km of canals and rivers in 2011-12, and in addition will spend £1.2 million on various high priority locations that have been identified as creating particular boating constraints.”

# The Boaters' Manifesto

NABO Vice Chair, **Simon Robbins**, welcomes this new initiative

**A**t its most recent meeting at the end of November, NABO Council agreed to formally endorse the Key Points in the Boaters manifesto. We are pleased to see that an independent group of boaters shares broadly the same concerns that we identified in our formal submission to Defra during the summer, about ensuring that navigation remains a central element in the proposed Canals and Rivers Trust. Boaters represent one of the core funders of the navigable waterways and this will continue for the foreseeable future. Apart from the direct fees paid to BW, we contribute substantially to BW's commercial income through the services we buy from waterside businesses. The Transition Trustees are clearly anxious to identify new funding streams for the new charity and this is an aspiration that boaters and representative groups have consistently lobbied for over many years. However many boaters feel that our interests as a major existing stakeholder may be sidelined. We hope that the Transition Trustees will not overlook the fact that on a conservative estimate over 20% of BW's annual income comes from boaters' pockets. Boaters represent a committed group of long term shareholders in the waterways and many feel that we need to be embraced rather than, as it sometimes feels under British Waterways, simply being taken for granted.

Subsequent to our Council meeting, the news that there may be a meeting between supporters of the Manifesto and Transition Trustees is encouraging. We are conscious that NABO is regarded by some as being among the 'usual suspects' in these matters and we think it is important that other boaters express their concerns too.

## Key Points of the Boater's Manifesto:

- 1 Waterways are about boats and boaters and the Canal and River Trust needs to listen to boaters more closely and have more representatives on the board.
- 2 Before the Trust accepts the legal burden of running the waterways it must ensure proper funding to keep all waterways open, navigable and properly maintained, otherwise it should refuse to do so.
- 3 Boaters have lost faith in the most senior management of British Waterways and believe that the government should accept the cost of making them redundant to give the Trust a fresh start.
- 4 The Trust must develop a system of working that values full-time paid staff and their skills above the expediency of using cheap contractors in order to maintain the skilled workforce the waterways require.
- 5 The Trust must enforce a simplified set of mooring rules across the entire waterways system without fear or favour.
- 6 The Trust must make it a priority to ensure non-boating users of the system make a financial contribution to its upkeep and that their use of the system does not impinge on its primary purpose of navigation.
- 7 The Trust must ensure it is open to Freedom of Information Act requests and operate in a totally transparent fashion if it is to earn and retain confidence.
- 8 Those for whom the waterways are a home have a special interest in and value to the Canal and River Trust and should be clearly represented at board level and consulted on all navigational issues.

## More Information:

NABO's submission to Defra can be viewed at [www.nabo.org.uk/issues/current-consultations/362-nabo-responds-to-the-defra-consultation-on-nwc](http://www.nabo.org.uk/issues/current-consultations/362-nabo-responds-to-the-defra-consultation-on-nwc).

Further details of the manifesto and a facility to add your name to the petition can be found at [boatersmanifesto.weebly.com/index.html](http://boatersmanifesto.weebly.com/index.html), or you can follow comments and debate on Facebook at [facebook.com/groups/boatersmanifesto/](https://facebook.com/groups/boatersmanifesto/)

# Cost cutting threatens Thames lock keepers' residency

Louis Jankel assesses new plans by the EA

The EA is intending to go back on its 2008 agreement to keep resident lock keepers at all 45 Thames locks. In 2008, the EA announced plans to dispose of a number of lock houses along the Thames, with the consequent disappearance of resident lock and weir keepers. After a substantial campaign involving a wide range of organisations and with the support of many MPs, the EA agreed not to proceed with lock house disposal and retain a lock and weir keeper at each of the lock sites. History is now repeating itself and it looks like we have to fight the battle all over again.

In October, the EA announced that currently vacant lock keepers houses at Grafton, Cleeve, Sunbury and Chertsey, for which resident keepers had not been appointed, would be put on the market for rental. In addition, when houses at Goring,

Whitchurch and Blakes become vacant later in the year, they would also be leased. I understand that the vacant resident posts associated with these houses have been 'frozen', with non-resident staff to take over. Although it is well recognised that the EA faces serious financial challenges, it is NABO's view that the employment of resident lock-keepers remains of crucial importance to the safety and well-being of the river. It is a cost that must be paid.

The Thames User Group, Navigation (TUGn) and other Thames societies are actively challenging these plans and NABO is pleased to be associated with this campaign. We call upon the Agency to shelve the rental proposal and reinstate the fundamental principal of a resident lockkeeper at every lock. In 2008, many organisations and individuals, including NABO, op-

Lock Keeper's house at Sonning Lock

Photo: Gavin Atkin



posed the removal of resident keepers as they believed it would be detrimental to the safety of those who travel on and live near the river and that it would alter the character and traditions of the Thames. This argument has not changed in 2011.

The resident lockkeepers are an integral part of the mix that makes the Thames the iconic waterway it is. They provide the eyes and ears of the Agency and provide a service to public and navigators. They manage the water levels and assist in providing first call emergency cover while living in their tied cottages. I do believe the EA have no intention of increasing the likelihood of flooding. The problem is that none of the dozen or so senior managers who are developing and advising on this policy has had any experience of the management and control of the Thames in flood. None of them was in post, directing or assisting in the control of the last serious flood event on the river in 2007.

The EA has decided not to cut the River Thames spend on repair and maintenance of locks that the Environment Agency Board had decided. The management has persuaded the EA Board to allow them to hold spending levels on lock works by taking more than £5m out of the staffing budget. The vast majority of those to be culled are the lock and weir staff, not by redundancy but by simply not replacing them or their jobs. The EA will try to run the Thames with 58 or 59 staff, which is 13 (23%) fewer staff than last year and 19 (33%) fewer than the winter before that. Last year the winter was dry and little floodwater was experienced so the amount of weir work needed was at an all time low, but 72 full-time staff were stretched to breaking point. The EA says it has variously 400, 200, 150 or dozens of support staff who can support the lock and weir staff. Of these, whatever the true number, only a few have been involved in weir reconstruction, but not this century as all such work has long since been contracted

out to engineering companies. Not a single one has any training in the black art of flood water control on a single weir. I know how to open a weir gate, but if I open it too much the dwellings below the lock can be flooded or conversely not opening it sufficiently will cause the water to back up and flood above the lock. Using staff who are not a lock or weir keeper to work on the weirs contravenes every Health and Safety stricture currently in place.

According to the current EA management, the Thames has days of notice of flooding. This is just not true. Those of us on the river during the 2007 floods remember how quickly the water rose to close the river - less than 24 hours in most areas above Staines. Mobile weir staff, if available, might not be able to reach locks because of access road flooding. There have been instances when weir movements have been delayed because a weir runner could not access the weir. In 2007, the instruction was to open up an entire Paddle and Rymer weir immediately. This is a two-man job and a relief was dispatched to help the lockkeeper. Because the flow was rising quickly, the resident weir keeper went to work and took two hours to open the weir. When he had finished he was ready to welcome the relief as he arrived. Had the lockkeeper waited that couple of hours, the relief would have been forced to stay at the lock for the duration of the flood. Another fact that has not been learned by this management is that control of floodwaters as they fall is important to ensure that flooding does not reoccur: it is imperative that water levels are allowed to drop uniformly along the length of the river, which requires every weir to be manned - not possible with the new plan.

It would be utterly irresponsible of us, the users, not to warn that through inexperience and muddled priorities, the EA are putting at risk every user and every resident on River Thames flood plain.

Talking Points: K and A Moorings

# Moorings along the K&A

David Fletcher takes a stroll on the towpath

“We prefer it when the boats don’t move because then we know where to go to put the ticket on them”

**BW Enforcement Officer**

While in the West Country, Val and I took the opportunity to walk the ten mile stretch of the K&A between Bath Locks and Bradford on Avon, which was the subject of BW’s case against a boater this year. The canal follows the Bath valley eastwards and shares the valley floor with the River Avon, the railway line and nearby main roads. It starts on the south side of the valley in Bath, crosses over at Dundas Aqueduct and back again at Avoncliff. The idea was to walk the pound and get a feel for the density of mooring, the services, and opportunities for visiting boats. We were there in October during the half-term holiday.

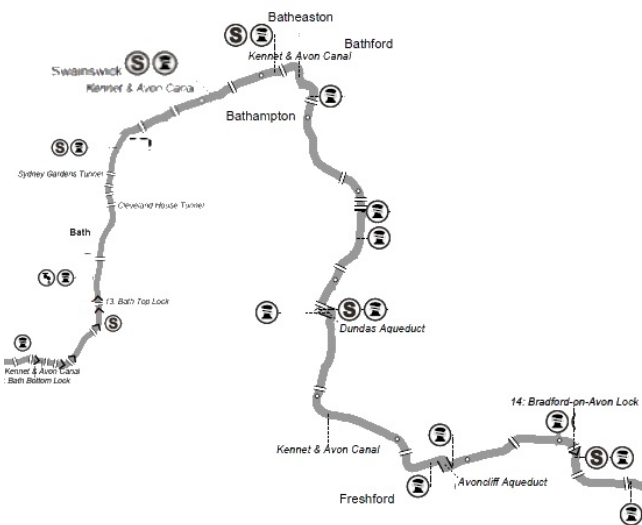
We walked from the station in Bath to the bottom lock and followed the towpath up the flight. There were few moorings in the flight and they were all occupied, with a mix of private and hire boats. The flight is visually in good condi-

tion, but there was quite some leakage and a few paddles out of action with Defra rash. The only boats moving were a handful of hire boats. I quizzed them about moorings and they all said that they had found no problem on their cruises.

Above the top lock there are some 48-hour moorings, which were all occupied. There are some other unrestricted moorings occupied by private boats. There was no free space. There is a small boatyard and then the canal passes through the bridges and tunnels at Sydney Gardens and there is little opportunity to moor. Above the final bridge there is a stretch of 24- and 48-hour moorings. They were busy but there was space, and the boats there were a mix of private and hire. Two boats had BW enforcement notices.

After this, the canal continues out of Bath to Bathampton. Along this length there were a number of private boats spaced apart and in some cases in groups. Some were not displaying valid licences. At Bathampton there are 48- and 24-hour moorings. These were empty except for a couple of hire boats outside the pub. Past the pub there is a long length of permit holder moorings, mainly occupied, but not full. After this, another area is almost fully occupied by private boats, some without displayed licences. This continues to the Bathampton swing bridge. Here there are a few offside moorings.

Then the canal twists to Claverton, with an occasional boats, perhaps a dozen in a mile, mainly near to bridges. The remainder of the canal is overgrown with reeds and not practical to moor. Most of the good moorings were taken by private boats. The unrestricted bank at the Claverton Pump Station was empty. Just beyond the bridge the 48-hour





moorings were partly occupied with a mixture of hire and private boats. After this there is a length of canal for permit holders. As we walked this stretch, a widebeam boat was moving ahead of us and this caused problems for some boats coming the other way. There is no line of sight past the moorings and having wide-beam boats in this permit group does not help. After this there is an offside mooring at Claverton Wood and a few private boats moored near to the swing bridge going towards Dundas. There was plenty of space to moor.

The 72-hour moorings at Dundas were full and there was a mix of hire and private boats. There is a small basin in the old arm at Dundas and the main movement here was electric day boats. There are a few moorings on both sides at the aqueduct and they were busy, but it was still possible to moor. The section between Dundas and Avoncliff was almost empty. This is the part that is concrete lined with insufficient depth to get close alongside. In spite of this there were a few solitary private boats. It is a lovely quiet spot to stop along this length. The Avoncliff approach was full despite the difficulties to get close to the bank. There was a lot of use of planks. At Avoncliff the permit holder moorings were only partially occupied, and the 24-hour moorings marked up for winter mooring sales.

And so it was all the way into Bradford on Avon. Near to Bradford on Avon the 24- and 48-hour moorings were full with private boats. But it was the end of the day and raining hard, so that was not a surprise. The moorings in the basin above the lock were also full.

**Some numbers:**

Approximately 210 private boats were seen. There are four broadly equal sections: Bath to Bathampton Bridge (52 boats), Bathampton Bridge to Dundas (100 boats), Dundas to Avoncliff (35 boats) and Avoncliff to Bradford (23 boats).



We noticed 10 hire boats and 4 day boats. We also noticed 12 boats not displaying a valid licence, 2 with BW enforcement notices attached. Claverton

**Some thoughts:**

It is a lovely stretch of canal and well worth the time and effort to get there. The towpath is in very good condition for the full length and is popular with walkers and cyclists. Boaters are using the path for cycle access. The valley is also well served



with trains and buses. The canal bank is generally overgrown and in need of dredging at least for moorings. The amount of weed and reed and the need for planks and pins make mooring a challenge in many places. 24- and 48-hour moorings are busy, but you can expect to get a mooring somewhere. The most con- Shallow concrete at Avoncliffe



Dundas 72 hour moorings

gested locations were at Bath and Bradford on Avon. The part of the canal with the most boats was the 2 miles or so between Bathampton Bridge and Dundas. I calculated a bank occupancy of 50% along this length, which is a lot. There are groups of boats at bridges, but the extent of this is not more than I have seen elsewhere on the system. There

are boats with debris and possessions on the bank, but again no more than I've seen elsewhere. The biggest groups of moored boats are at the permit holder moorings, and the 24- and 48-hour moorings. The numbers of boats we saw corresponds well with a similar count in the summer of 2010 by Peter Fellows (NABO News, March, 2011).

#### My conclusion:

The mooring issues seen in October are not as bad as one might think. Hire boats and visitors appear to be getting a share of moorings and there was no gridlock except perhaps when widebeam boats are moving. There is a need for general enforcement for licence evasion and to keep boats moving every 14 days. There are obvious 'places' in this section for the requirements of the 95 Act to provide guidance for movement. The 48-hour moorings at Bath and Bradford could be readily extended with dredging and rings.



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# Northmoor Weir under threat

Kristina Meyer of Save the Weir Campaign believes the EA has got it wrong

**W**ith work to replace a rare weir due to start in less than four months, campaigners are asking for urgent action to be taken. Northmoor Weir is situated on the Thames and is passed by thousands of boaters and walkers each year. It is thought to be the only remaining Paddle and Rymer weir that spans the whole of a river - possibly the only one in the world.

Paddle and Rymer weirs date back to medieval times, with mention made in the literature to early 'flash weirs' as early as 1292. Northmoor weir is an internationally unique piece of heritage. The lock house, weir and lock together give boaters a unique opportunity to see a full Victorian lock station, just as it was at the time it was built. It also serves as an example of how river levels were maintained on the Thames for centuries before automation. The EA has decided to knock down the weir and replace it with an automated concrete one costing £3 Million. It first said it was for flood defence reasons and later admitted (Oxford Times October 28th) that it will not have a significant, if any, effect on flood defences. The EA also say it is for Health and Safety reasons, but their supporting evidence has been independently assessed and found to be highly misleading. There have been no major accidents recorded on the weir in its 115-year life while

there have been many on automated weirs.

The EA claim that automating the weir will make it more reliable. Campaigners argue that a weir with a historically proven 100% reliability rate cannot be improved. The weir was refurbished sympathetically, reusing many original components in 1995 and given a 60-year lifespan. The refurbishment was carried out following the same Health and Safety laws that apply today. Campaigners not only believe that the EA is misusing funds for a project that will provide no greater flood defence for taxpayers, but also that an internationally significant feature of worldwide river heritage will be lost. With work due to start in Spring 2012, Kristina Meyer, part of the Northmoor Weir Campaign Team, said: "We are asking all waterway users and heritage lovers to pass on the word regarding Northmoor Weir. We have less than four months until work is due to start.

## Louis Jankel, NABO's Thames Representative, comments:

I have been involved in the discussions on Paddle and Rymer weirs over the past three years and I have worked as a volunteer and am signed off at this lock. The lock keepers that work such weirs swear by them because they have the ability to control river levels to a fine degree. The

Northmoor Weir on the Thames - the last full-river Paddle and Rymer weir in the world?

Photos: Fiona Slea



weirs obviously cannot be automated and such control is a priority of the EA, with which I agree. The replacement weirs are funded from special funds negotiated with Defra under Health and Safety requirements. This may indeed have been a vehicle to remove Paddle and Rymer weirs, but it was an almost unanimous agreement by the Regional Fisheries Ecology and Recreation Advisory Committee to accept their replacement. Northmoor is the final weir to be removed but its only historical value is being the last example on the Thames. I agree with your replacements but I have a problem with the Northmoor Weir, where the engineers have decided to use a two-gate replacement instead of the original four gates employed at Radcot. This is an economy too far. It is unwise to limit the safety of the weir operation, which is the effect this will have. I understand the feelings (of the Weir Campaign Team) but I believe there is little chance the decision will be changed.

**John Slee, NABO's continual cruising Council member, adds:**

Having been through Northmoor Lock four times this summer, I feel it would be a travesty if this part of our River Thames heritage is lost. One of my other concerns is that this is being done under false pretences, with it providing yet another potential opportunity to reduce the lock staffing by replacing a man-power controlled weir with a press-button one. What happens if there is a loss of power through the same storm that raises water levels? The fact that the incumbent lock keeper (together with many others) does not want to see this transformation should encourage us to do everything in our power to stop this EA (mis)management steamroller.

**Kristina Meyer replies**

There have been significantly more recorded injuries on winding up back-up mechanisms of automated weirs than have ever been recorded



on the Paddle and Rymer weirs. Let's not forget that the perceived health and safety risk of Paddle and Rymer weirs is why the EA says they should be replaced. Some Paddle and Rymer weirs were in a terrible state and there was no alternative to replacing them. Northmoor is in perfect condition and was given a 60-year lifespan 16 years ago. It is the last full-river example and must be retained. I'm sure that although river users agree that the more rundown Paddle and Rymer weirs should be updated, increasing support from the boating community proves that they do not for Northmoor - cost and heritage value are obviously the issues. The original weir campaign was not 'lost': EA offered the weir to the community in trust. This offer was taken in good faith by the community. Then EA ceased to talk to the campaign and stalled any attempts to take it further. EA then came back to us months later saying that the work was going ahead. Valuable time for us was lost and we were back to square one.

With regard to the new structure, what further example does one need of the EA's huge mismanagement of this project. The community were asked to choose which new weir they most 'liked the look of', and of course they would choose two gates as this was the least obtrusive. Unless I am misguided and the majority of the village are water management experts, this was another mind-bogglingly misguided move by the EA.

**How you can help:**

Lobby Paul Leinster, Chief Executive at the EA at PO Box 544, Rotherham, S60 1BY, 03708 506506 or [enquiries@environment-agency.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@environment-agency.gov.uk).

Contact David Cameron and Nicola Blackwood (the weir spans their constituencies) at [www.writetothem.com](http://www.writetothem.com)

Sign our petition at [www.savetheweir.com](http://www.savetheweir.com)

Have Your Say

# Letters to the Editor

Opinions expressed here are independent of NABO policy and statements made have not been verified as true.

## Life isn't fair!

The Continuous Cruiser debate lingers on: David Peck's letter is the voice of enmity. 'I pay moorings why shouldn't those CCs pay?' Life isn't fair! As a boater I pay for other folks' children's schooling. I don't have kids. Not fair. I earn less than 100th of Mr Evans' salary but contribute to his £15,000 bonus. Not fair. I helped restore the Marple flight when living at Mellor as a student and now have to stomach the acrimony of Mr Peck and his followers about my canal usage. Not fair. I don't recall seeing Mr Peck at any of the work weekends.

Yes, in his book, I'm an offender. Worse still I'm on his Macclesfield Canal patch. I would direct Mr Peck to Bowling Basin, Glasgow. There, BW set about the so called 'offenders', all pensioners if I recall correctly - a bit like at Dale Farm: move in, sort out, move on. If more examples are needed, please remember the evictions at Jericho, Brentford and Gas Street Basin among others. How many £ millions did those cost? And for what benefit? Was the expense worth all the human/inhuman disruption? BW could find a £ million to secure its 1995 BW Private Act but still feel justified in pleading poverty. It seemingly has no money for this and no money for that, but it can afford new signs, new vehicles, new advertising, and can inconveniently lose £7.5 million on its discredited pubs venture - and another £90k on prosecuting Mr Davies at the Bristol court. Gosh, life's not fair.

But ultimately that is not the issue: money perhaps is. Many boaters think mooring charges are exorbitant. They're right. Many more actually can't afford them. I count myself amongst them. Are we to be excluded from the canal because of the views of the Mr Pecks of this world? Surely not? Yesterday's boaters pulled together; today's boaters fight each other. Where have things gone wrong? It's mostly BW's fault because its various licensing and mooring policies have always been inflationary and have always favoured the moneyed boater. I see BW as 'Boater Unfriendly': I ask where was BW when we were fighting to keep red diesel? When are developers required to offer subsidised moorings when established

moorings are lost to housing? Where is the pro-boater agenda we need and want? Instead we get more unnecessary rules, regulations and price increases all wrapped up in fluffy PR. I'm surprised the words 'We're wonderful' haven't been added to the description of the new trust:

'Canals and Rivers.... Trust us, we're wonderful!'

So I find Mr Peck's attitude tiresome, meal-minded and inappropriate. His targeted audience in the main are BW's least well off customers who are simply trying to eek out a humble existence in the face of great adversity. Come and join us, Mr Peck, if you want a fairer deal from your boating. We'll try and make you welcome.

**Simon Greer, Macclesfield Canal**

PS. I attach my interpretation of the new logo. I'll be offering a printed sticky-back version shortly to boaters. If Mr Peck wants to send me his address he can have a freebee, courtesy of a boater with a bigger vision.



## 'Faith and Silliness, and BW

As we gathered at the annual June Russell Newbery rally in Stourbridge, the pound was already down a little, resulting in many of the 60 boats being moored away from the towpath. During the afternoon a bunch of (dare I say) jobs came from the town and started lobbing loose bricks from the deteriorating bridge onto the tops of boats. Eventually the police chased them off and the offenders set off cross country, from

where, two hours later, the fire brigade were called to a fire in an old building. How could they annoy us further? We found out at about 1.30 am, when we rolled out of bed onto the floor, being gently showered with antifreeze from the central heating overflow. The pound was down a long way and we phoned BW. They replied: "We are not allowed to work in the dark!" A brave lady from an adjacent boat set off on her bike with a windlass and lowered the paddles at Stourton, 4.5 miles away. It took 48 hours for the pound to refill. When we got to Bratch, the lock keeper, who lives in Stourbridge, had heard of the incident and apologised on behalf of his colleagues.

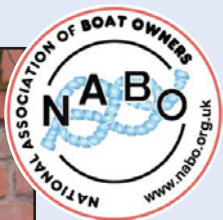
The weekend before August bank holiday, one of the paddles was broken at the bottom of Atherton flight. The grapevine said it had been out of action for at least 14 days. These locks are notoriously slow filling at the best of times and obviously there was a long queue and delay. Next morning, three well-dressed BW employees walked past and I attempted to talk to them about the broken paddle, but they said they were too busy and walked on. Two hours later they came back and I tried again. They replied: "We do have time to discuss your problems". From their clothes, I believe that they were "Management", as no BW worker has ever failed to help in such circumstances. Next day, a BW man was letting down water to a lower pound and he told me he'd been with BW for 30 years. I asked him about the delay in fixing the broken paddle and he said that in the old days, he and his mate would probably have fixed it at once, in half a day. But nowadays he had to fill in a multi-page

'Risk Assessment' form and send it to his manager... but he's on holiday! Even when it's approved and work starts, if the pound needs to be drained they have to send for the gas inspector. I wonder how many people have been gassed by canals this century?

Finally, the Canal and Rivers Trust, or BW with the same three directors now renamed trustees, with presumably the same salaries, reduced government grant, but increased overheads. Tony Hales is welcoming back the Waterways Trust. Remember why it was formed? BW were losing money with the three museums, so offloaded them. The Trust has a fundraiser and BW has just recruited an expensive professional fundraiser, who will have to raise at least £150,000 to cover her salary, pension and other costs before the new trust earns a penny. Why do they now need two fundraisers? I also think the new trustees should refuse to take on BW's long-term liabilities, which need sorting before the takeover. To mention just two: the landslip north of Brinklow and accommodation bridge 80, south of Barby on the North Oxford, which has been in an appalling state for at least 10 years. These really should be repaired before the charity takes over. There must be many more like these throughout the system. Most disturbing of all, I read that the new trust wants exclusion from the Freedom of Information Act! Why? So they will not have to answer the questions they don't want to answer? We must all act in concert to correct these issues before the new trust takes over.

**Bridge 31** (Name and email supplied)





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